

El Niño conditions could affect the Primera growing season

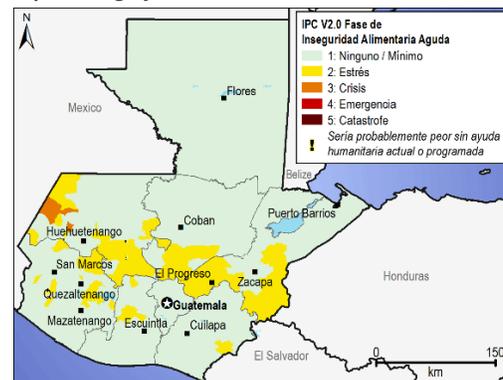
KEY MESSAGES

- The El Niño phenomenon is fully established, which will affect the regularity and amount of rainfall, reducing yields of basic grain crops for the *Primera* growing season harvested in September.
- Deliveries of food assistance will keep food security outcomes for the majority of households that have been affected by the protracted 2014 *canícula* and coffee rust outbreak in **eastern and temperate western highland (*altiplano*) areas** at Stressed (IPC Phase 2!) through August by partially closing food consumption gaps.
- Scheduled deliveries of food assistance will end in August. Food security outcomes in September for households in the **east** will be Stressed (IPC Phase 2), with some localized populations in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) by the beginning of the harvest. Meanwhile, the termination of assistance programs before the beginning of the harvest in November will propel households in the **west** back into Crisis (IPC Phase 3).

CURRENT SITUATION

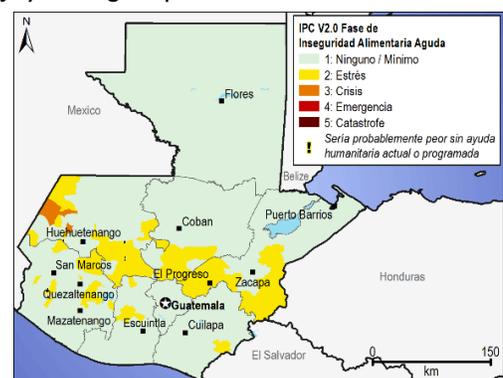
- The provision of food assistance by the World Food Program (WFP) through food voucher and cash transfer programs funded by USAID, Canada, and ECHO expected to start up in the middle of this month will help reduce the food consumption gaps of 20,715 households affected by the protracted 2014 *canícula* and mitigate the impact of the coffee rust outbreak on their incomes. Target service areas include municipalities in Quiché and Jalapa for a four-month period and in Huehuetenango and San Marcos for a three-month period.
- In general, basic grain prices in all parts of the country were stable between March and April due to a stable supply of grain from the latest harvests in the north and informal trade flows from Mexico. The only price increases since last year are in black bean prices, which had been quite low in 2014 as a result of the above-average harvest for the 2013/14 growing season. Current prices for black beans are below figures for 2011-2013. White maize prices have come down from their peak levels in 2011, when they were driven up by the combined effects of Tropical Storm Agatha, hoarding, and speculation.

Figure 1. Estimated food security outcomes for May through June 2015



Source: FEWS NET

Figure 2. Estimated food security outcomes for July through September 2015



Source: FEWS NET

These maps show relevant *acute* food insecurity outcomes for emergency decision-making. They do not necessarily reflect *chronic* food insecurity. For more on this scale, visit: www.fews.net/IPC.

- According to the FAO report as of May 3rd, households in northern and southern areas of the country still have reserves from the last harvest. On the other hand, households in eastern and western areas have had no basic grain reserves since January due to crop losses from the protracted 2014 *canícula*.
- The International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI) is predicting a strengthening and persistent El Niño phenomenon, putting the likelihood of El Niño (ENSO) conditions over the period between June and August at 90 percent. Its presence is affecting the early part of the current rainy season, producing start-of-season anomalies, and could create cumulative rainfall deficits in areas of the country impacted by rainfall conditions similar to the current forecast for the past three years.

UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS

The assumptions used by FEWS NET in establishing [the most likely food security scenario for the period from April through September 2015](#) have not changed.

PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2015

The onset of the annual lean season has triggered a seasonal deterioration in the food security situation of the poorest group of households. Most poor households no longer have reserves from their own production of basic grains, and those in areas affected by last year's rainfall deficit depleted their reserves much earlier than usual. As a result, they are dependent on market purchase for their food supplies, which makes them more vulnerable to expected seasonal rises in prices. Household food access will be strained with the seasonal decline in employment opportunities and wage income from day labor. Households in most geographic areas of the country unaffected by the 2014 rainfall deficit will turn to their usual strategies for coping with any food access issues and will be able to meet their basic food needs. **Thus, households in most geographic areas of the country will experience Minimal (IPC Phase 1) acute food insecurity during this period.**

On the other hand, households in the "Dry Corridor" in eastern and temperate western *altiplano* areas suffered the combined effects of the especially long 2014 *canícula* and the coffee rust outbreak. This dual shock has reduced their cash income and weakened their resilience for a third consecutive year, limiting the poorest households to resorting to negative strategies (such as cutting their number of meals and the size of their portions and eating seeds), which will still not suffice to meet their basic food and non-food needs. Scheduled assistance from WFP for the next few months will help reduce their food consumption gaps until August or September and the beginning of the harvest of *Primera* crops in the east. Based on predicted rainfall anomalies and deficits, crop production for the *Primera* growing season is expected to be below-average, which means that maize reserves from this growing season may last only until October, making farming households dependent once again on market purchase for their food supplies. **Accordingly, these households are expected to face Stressed (IPC Phase 2!) food security outcomes with the help of scheduled assistance. The subsequent harvest will keep household food insecurity in the east at Stressed (IPC Phase 2) levels through the end of the outlook period. While there will be localized populations in Crisis (IPC Phase 3), this group is not expected to reach 20 percent of the area's total population, the threshold for establishing area classification.**

Conditions in the west are mixed, where the sole harvest in November/December will keep households dependent on market purchase until that time. **Thus, food security outcomes in the worst-off areas in this part of the country will be Stressed (IPC Phase 2!) between now and August, mitigated by food assistance, except in certain municipalities in Huehuetenango not targeted for assistance, which will remain in Crisis (IPC Phase 3, see map). With the phasing out of food assistance beginning in August, the worst-off households in this area will once again be facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) food security outcomes.**